

# Fightback

*Struggle, Solidarity, Socialism*



CLIMATE CHANGE  
JUST TRANSITION



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# Editorial

Welcome to the first issue of *Fightback* for 2020. As this issue goes to press, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to grow around the world. So far, Aotearoa New Zealand has a small number of confirmed cases and no deaths, but measures are being put into place to ensure that the spread of the disease is at least minimised. The COVID-19 crisis is the latest in a series of extreme events linked to climate change. Rises in temperature, pollution, deforestation and industrial-scale farming (particularly meat production) are just some of the reasons for the increase in rapidly-spreading and mutating viruses.

The new decade began with the Australian bushfires which started in late 2019, continuing into 2020, leaving at least 33 dead, 11 million hectares of bush, forest and parks burned, and an estimated 1 billion animals killed, including endangered species. The bushfires also represented the reality of the climate crisis and the cost of years of climate change denial by successive governments. The widespread anger at the inaction of the conservative federal government and Prime Minister Scott Morrison has given the movement against climate change a boost. While the media focused on the role of young people, especially school students, in the huge protests against the government's adherence to fossil fuels, there has also been an increase in participation from the unions – including unions with members in the mining and forestry industries, who have traditionally taken a pro-industry stance aimed at protecting members' jobs. The slogan "No jobs on a dead planet" is being taken up more extensively with the Just Transition movement gaining strength.

Aotearoa/New Zealand is of course, not immune from the effects of climate change, despite having been shielded by its geographic isolation from some of the worst examples. Rising sea levels, drought and extreme weather events are already part of the new normal. As the country with the largest number of Pacific peoples in the world, the effects of climate change in countries like Tuvalu and Samoa cannot be ignored, as the likelihood of climate migration from those countries increases. Given the history of imperialism and racism by New Zealand in the Pacific, the environment movement needs to support the right of those affected by climate change to migrate to Aotearoa/NZ, as well as demanding that our government increase funding to support repair and mitigation measures so that those who wish to remain in their countries can do so safely. We must also oppose the argument that climate change is exacerbated by migration, an argument based on racism and one that has no basis in fact.

While media has concentrated on the climate-related disasters in "Western" countries like Australia, the scale of the climate emergency in the third world has been largely ignored. While Australian bushfires raged, Indonesia was facing unprecedented flooding, and the Amazon continued to burn. Climate change activists in many countries, particularly in South America, are being increasingly subjected to harassment and even murder, for speaking out against corporate interests and corrupt governments. Indigenous peoples are at the forefront of these struggles. Campaigns for traditional lands to be preserved, such as that of the Wet'su'wen in Canada, and the occupation of Ihumatao in Aotearoa, are also part of the broader struggle against racism and colonialism. These campaigns also challenge unacknowledged racism and privilege in the mainstream environmental movement.

Ecosocialism recognises that the struggle against climate change is inextricably linked with struggles of indigenous peoples, against racism and sexism, and against inequality. It argues that "Green capitalism" is a contradiction in terms and that revolutionary change is needed to save our planet. This conclusion is being shared by an increasing number of people, with the slogan "System change, not climate change" being frequently seen on the rallies organised by young students inspired by Greta Thunberg and others. Our German correspondent Jojo Klick examines the theory behind ecosocialism, and gives some examples of how it has been put into practice.

We wish our readers good health, and look forward to your continuing support of *Fightback*.



# The impacts of climate change on New Zealand

By BRUCE ANDERSON



School Climate Strike in Wellington, NZ.  
Photo: Greenpeace

Since this article was first drafted in early February, the coronavirus outbreak has been declared a world-wide pandemic, and is turning into a major economic and social crisis. Yesterday Australia and New Zealand both closed their borders. How its aftermath is handled may give us a clearer view of the likelihood of each of the three scenarios described in this article.

Some would consider this crisis unrelated to climate change, but evidence is building that our despoilation of the environment (driven by the need for growth, and cheap fossil fuel energy) may be linked to these outbreaks, as non-human life is stressed and adapts to the rapid changes we are causing (see for example: “‘Tip of the iceberg’: is our destruction of nature responsible for COVID-19”, by John Vidal, for *The Guardian*).

Whether it is directly linked or not, it is one of those crises which increase the pressure on us as societies to change rapidly and transformatively. If our primary medium term response is “Phew, that’s over, now we’d better rebuild the economy and get back on track”, we will be heading down the “business as usual” path to environmental apocalypse. If our response is “Phew, we got through that one, people have responded well to it, maybe we do have the political capital for a massive re-direction of resources to mitigate and adapt to the warming planet”, we may get closer to the “great turning” which is needed to build a better and more sustainable society. And if our response is simply “So what lessons can we learn to help us prepare better for the next pandemic?”, we are on the “muddling through” path, making incremental changes in reaction to crises rather than working

on the big picture.

Place your bets please. Or, better still, work out how you can best help influence our societal response so we move towards the necessary transformation.

## Climate change is the “canary in the coal mine”

We are in a world-wide environmental, economic, and social crisis. The land and water are being poisoned by the expansion of industrial food production, and misused in the increasing production of “luxury” food such as meat, dairy (and almonds in California!). We will run out of fertile land in 55 years or so, on our current trajectory<sup>1</sup>. We are also poisoning the water and the air, heating the air and the oceans, and decreasing the species diversity which underpins the flourishing of life, through our expansion of industrial activity and distribution fuelled by coal, oil and gas.

Our dominant economic system is based on perpetual growth, which on a finite planet is clearly unsustainable, and on increasing concentration of ownership and wealth in fewer and fewer hands, through the exploitation of both people and nature. The social impacts of all this are steadily growing, with increases in the number and scale of local environmental disasters, instances of local food and water scarcity, and population unrest and dislocation. And the people least responsible for this crisis – such as our Pacific neighbours, living in low-lying atolls and islands, and contributing far less to emissions than Australia and New Zealand – are likely to face the greatest consequences.

While the roots of this have been with us since the European “Enlightenment”, and particularly the Industrial Revolution, the major immediate cause is the unleashing of globalist capitalism over the last fifty years, and the spectacular increase in consumption this has enabled in the affluent world.

All of this is having increasing impacts on New Zealand. However, the rest of this article will take a relatively narrow view of climate change and its impacts. It will confine itself to impacts directly related to the increased warming of the earth’s atmosphere and oceans. This will understate and even in some cases ignore the potential effects of the various elements and their inter-relationships.

<sup>1</sup> See <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/only-60-years-of-farming-left-if-soil-degradation-continues/>



ships on our current crisis. On the other hand, climate change is both a leading indicator of the crisis, and also can only be addressed effectively through addressing most if not all elements of the crisis. So we can treat it as the canary in the coal mine. Or the rather large flock of dying canaries.

## There is no room for denialism, or minimisation, here

I'm not going to waste much space making a case that climate change is real. The overwhelming scientific consensus is that anthropogenic climate change, primarily through increased carbon release, is heating the atmosphere and oceans. The effects of this are now becoming obvious even to the casual observer, with increases in the severity of weather events causing droughts, floods, and extreme temperatures.

Carbon levels in the atmosphere are going up by 2-3 parts per million each year and are currently at about 415ppm, compared with the pre-industrial level of 280. When they were last at this level, some millions of years ago, temperatures were significantly higher, and sea-levels were 20-30 metres above what they are now. But it takes many decades for the full effects of increased carbon levels to be felt – that's why we're not currently swimming for our lives.

The Planetary Boundaries framework developed by the Stockholm Resilience Institute<sup>2</sup> sets a "red-zone" boundary of 450ppm after which all bets will be off, and climate conditions and weather events will become so extreme and unpredictable as to probably make much of the Earth uninhabitable in the medium term. On our current trajectory, we will pass this boundary in 15-30 years (although it will some decades longer before all the extreme effects are felt).

Unfortunately, the science of all this tends to lag behind actual events, and things are likely to happen faster than science predicts. Each of the IPCC's five yearly reports has been more pessimistic than the last, and their most recent reports are about as shrill as good scientists can get, for example: "We have till 2030 to cut our carbon emissions by 45% if we are to have any chance of keeping temperature increases below 1.5 degrees"<sup>3</sup>.

Moreover, interconnections between changes may lead to tipping events (such as rapid deterioration of the Greenland or West Antarctic ice-sheets, or increased methane release in Siberia, or collapse of large chunks of the Amazon rainforest into savannah) which disrupt the linear projections currently be made.

So we as a species are likely to continue to be surprised by the increasing speed of change, and "caught short" in

any preparation we do.

## New Zealand as a lifeboat

New Zealand's position (isolated in the middle of the Southern Ocean), geology (a volcanic spine on top of intersecting Continental plates), and political and social stability (few recent wars or major uprisings), give it certain advantages relative to many other places in the world as we face our climate crisis.

The ocean has a moderating effect on temperatures, severity of weather events, and unsolicited arrivals; we have enough moderately fertile soil to feed ourselves and then some; the high proportion of uplands means that retreat from the rising oceans is feasible; and as long as we don't succumb to the extreme sorts of political behaviour currently infecting parts of the Northern Hemisphere, we might be able to manage all of this in a more or less orderly manner.

These are the reasons why an increasing number of wealthy people are starting to bunker down here, paying more or less attention to how they integrate themselves into New Zealand depending on their natures. Apparently Alaska and New Zealand are highly favoured locations for "weathering the storm" (or at least surviving the early parts of it).

We are a lifeboat. But, to extend the metaphor, let us not pretend that the seas we are in will be calm.

## The impacts of climate change are pretty much locked in for the next decade

World-wide (and New Zealand) average temperatures are currently just over 1 degree above pre-industrial levels, and will continue to rise towards about 1.5 degrees over the next few decades. This "average" conceals wide regional variations in averages – for example, the Arctic has been averaging as much as 6 degrees above – and, more obviously, extremes – for example, the recent record highs in Australia and New Zealand (and pretty much everywhere else). Increasing temperatures in the oceans will combine with this to add more moisture – and more energy – to the atmosphere, increasing the number and severity of extreme weather events.

There are also regional influences which dampen or accentuate the general trends, in particular the El Nino-Southern Oscillation in the Pacific, and the Indian Ocean Dipole, either separately or reinforcing each other.

In New Zealand, average and extreme temperatures will continue to rise more or less in line with the world-wide trends – with the extremes rising more quickly than the averages, and becoming more frequent, and drought/flooding conditions becoming more severe.

Overall, the North and the East Coast will get hotter

<sup>2</sup> See <https://www.stockholmresilience.org/research/planetary-boundaries.html>

<sup>3</sup> See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special\\_Report\\_on\\_Global\\_Warming\\_of\\_1.5\\_%C2%B0C](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special_Report_on_Global_Warming_of_1.5_%C2%B0C)

and drier (but still subject to torrential downpours), while the South and the West will heat more slowly, and get wetter in general<sup>4</sup>. The biggest impacts in the next decade will be from extreme weather events. Bigger droughts, storms, floods, fires and, close to my home, bigger wind runs. Wellington has over the last few years been experiencing relatively benign wind conditions, but this spring and summer the higher winds have begun to return – and we probably ain't seen nothing yet when it comes to severe gales in the Cook Strait area during the next decade.

This will all put increasing strain on local communities and physical infrastructure. Some will be more or less unaffected and some will be moderately or severely damaged. Water supply will become a major issue in many communities; emergency and support services will come under more severe pressure, with less time to recover and re-plan between events; insurance will become harder or impossible to obtain for low lying areas and fruit and vegetable production; the calls for local financial relief will have an increasing effect on government budgets and spending; and some coastal communities will have to start looking at relocation (from greater storm surges rather than average sea-level rise).

How we as a *national* community respond to all this is one key to our future. In many cases, local communities will be unable to recover without outside help. So how those who are less affected respond, as the calls for help increase in number and severity, will be very important. They will HAVE to share some of their own time, wealth and support if we are to maintain New Zealand-wide social stability, which will become increasingly important as the century wears on.

And, even in the next decade, this may all be thrown into more turmoil if the state and civil society fail to adequately respond to increasing numbers of refugees caused by the greater deterioration of conditions elsewhere. More housing, more services, more investment in infrastructure will all be necessary. But external impacts such as these are likely to be more severe over the middle decades of the century rather than in the 2020s.

## Our politics<sup>5</sup>, current and future, determines impacts beyond the next decade

What happens beyond 2030 is a function of political decisions and actions we in New Zealand, and in the rest of the world, make over the next 10 to 30 years:

- ☐ If political action continues as now, marginal changes will continue to be made within the capitalist perpet-

<sup>4</sup> See <https://www.mfe.govt.nz/publications/climate-change/climate-change-projections-new-zealand>

<sup>5</sup> Here I define politics as Colin Hay's wide and perceptive a community's use of its "capacity for agency and deliberation in situations of genuine collective or social choice". Thanks to Ani White for pointing me to this.

ual growth model, and climate change will move into uncharted and extremely violent territory later in the century. We will be at about a 4-degree temperature increase no later than the early 2100s, a level which, when put to groups of scientists as a possibility, causes them to put their heads in their hands and despair. This is in line with Joanna Macy's "business as usual" and "great unravelling" scenarios<sup>6</sup>.

- ☐ If enough of us manage to "bite the bullet" over the next few years, to look and act beyond capitalism, forming a renewed partnership with nature and building societies based on social justice and economic thrift, we have the capability to transform ourselves, and to mitigate, and eventually reverse, the more severe impacts of climate change. This is in line with Macy's "great turning" scenario.
- ☐ It seems most likely to me that we will end up somewhere between these two extremes, being forced by crises to take more radical actions than currently contemplated in mainstream politics, but never developing or acting out a coherent strategy based on real understanding and acceptance of the causes of, and effective responses to, the overall crisis. This is the "muddling through" scenario (my name for it), and its eventual outcomes are wildly uncertain compared to the other two scenarios.

The rest of this essay briefly explores the possible impacts on New Zealand of each of these three scenarios over the next generation (to 2050) and century (to 2120).

## The climate-related impacts on New Zealand of the "business as usual" scenario

In the next generation (to the year 2050), we will see the extremes of the 2020s as described above continue to accelerate. In addition, crop failures will increase, and food security will reduce. As immigration increases, mostly driven by the impacts of the climate crisis elsewhere, there is considerable risk that populists will scapegoat the newcomers for the crisis, and that the state will respond by repression of various groups rather than concentrating on provision of adequate infrastructure for a growing population.

Health related issues will really start to bite, with pests, viruses, and the risks of epidemics, much more frequent. There will still be parts of New Zealand only indirectly affected by most of this, but the overall economic effects and sense of crisis will mean they are no longer able to pretend that they can distance themselves from the issues.

By 2120, weather extremes will be apocalyptic, and a subsistence existence will be the best most of us can hope for. A connected society as we currently know it

<sup>6</sup> See for example <https://www.activehope.info/three-stories.html>, referring into "Active Hope: How To Face The Mess We're In Without Going Crazy", by Joanna Macy and Chris Johnstone, 2012



will have largely ceased to exist, and international travel will be done only by the foolhardiest of sailors. There will undoubtedly be survivor communities in various parts of New Zealand, probably mostly on the west coasts, but many of the trappings of affluent society will be gone. Sea level rise will have caused retreat from areas of some cities (notably Christchurch), but the bigger issues will be collapses of infrastructure and failure of emergency and support services, making severe social breakdown probable, but not certain (we may still manage to struggle to survive together, but that's all we'll be doing).

## The climate-related impacts on New Zealand of the “great turning” scenario

The next generation will be one of social turmoil, as we construct a useful common narrative to underpin the transformation. The current moves towards renewable energy, based on carbon-intensive manufacturing and electric vehicles, will be rapidly overtaken by low-energy realism, and a broadly local community-based “food, water and energy self-sufficiency” movement.

The air and oceans will continue to heat up for some time, and events will continue to get more extreme. But, as forest plantings increase, industrial dairying and large animal farming are abandoned, and other sensible techniques are used to begin drawing down atmospheric carbon, this trend will slow – and even potentially start reversing – by 2050.

This will be a hard period, both economically and socially. Costs will be high, both to mitigate the ongoing effects of global warming and also to bring the low carbon technologies that will form the basis of our more sustainable future up to scale. And the pressures from multiple sources will make negotiation and non-violent conflict resolution critical skill sets for many of us.

On the more positive side, a social narrative and economic system based on recognising the best of our impulses and behaviours, and not the worst, will steadily gain supporters. The efforts at community-rebuilding that are currently run as fringe activities by many groups will become more mainstream, as the cult of individual celebrity and personal consumption is replaced by one of mutual recognition and respect. In particular, tangata tiriti and tangata whenua will learn from and support each other in honouring the Treaty of Waitangi, and in protecting the land and water. We will also honour our obligations to our Pacific neighbours, whether by investing in prevention and mitigation to ensure they are not forced to leave their homes, or by recognising their right to sanctuary.

By 2120, the new narrative and lifestyles will be much stronger. Regional communities will be larger and more respected, as people-intensive multi-cropping agriculture has become the norm. Global warming and climate impacts will have been reversed, although how far this will go back toward or beyond where it is today is uncertain.

International trade and travel will be largely confined to essentials. In New Zealand and other affluent countries, the material wealth of the rich will be substantially reduced, but there will be material improvements for the poor. Life will be slower, but emotionally and socially richer.

## The climate-related impacts on New Zealand of the “muddling through” scenario

Place your bets everyone. There are potentially some very bad, and some quite good, impacts in this scenario. The climate will continue to deteriorate, but at a slower rate than in the “business as usual” scenario. Life will get harsher, and international trade and travel will drop considerably. But in terms of social impacts, there will be one of two broad trends, one towards authoritarianism, the other one towards democracy.

Over the next generation, the “constant crisis” mode of reacting to major events will be accentuated. This could lead towards either greater centralisation of power or greater decentralisation, as progress is made towards local resilience. There will be winners and losers from the piecemeal approach to climate solutions – this applies both to people and to places. Some places will become ghost towns, others will thrive. And none of this will be very predictable, as the complexities of the mix of status quo and radical changes will make their impacts very uncertain.

By 2120, the climate situation may have stabilised, at a hotter, wetter/drier, normal, or may still be on the path to complete collapse, albeit at a slower pace than in the “business as usual” scenario.

In social terms, any type of political system, from fascism through feudalism to democratic socialism, is possible. In economic terms, we can presume that the use of sequestered carbon (ie oil and coal) will be largely confined to high yield, long term products, but there will almost certainly still be high-end, luxury travel and transport available for privileged people and goods. And the gaps between rich and poor might be worse or better than now – if we go down the fascist route (probably via populism while still democratic in name at least), they will be worse; if a more democratic route, better.

## Conclusion

If you wish to independently find out more about the potential impacts of climate change on New Zealand, the Ministry for the Environment has published national and regional climate change projections out to 2090, including some material on impacts. These are based on the IPCC's models and projections, and so are quite conservative. Parts of this essay have used some of the Ministry's projections, which are referenced in Endnote iv.

# Snapshots of the ecological crisis in Australasia

By ANI WHITE



Sky in Auckland during the Australian bushfires.  
Photo: Bronwen Beechey

## New Years' Day 2020, Otepoti/ Dunedin (Aotearoa/New Zealand)

Ironically, my first real-life encounter with the Australian bushfires – not mediated by Facebook, Twitter, or a press article – is the smoke that drifts to Dunedin, Aotearoa/New Zealand. Ironical because despite being born in NZ, my current place of residence is Victoria, Australia – a region which was only directly affected after my NZ holiday began. NZ is over 3,000 kilometres from Australia – contrary to a common misconception we are not near to each other – so the smoke reaching Dunedin in NZ's far south is not insignificant.

Although the yellow tint over Dunedin is less severe than habitats and homes destroyed, or deaths, the directness of the experience affects me more. It's the first time the bushfires make me tear up. The concept of climate grief names this experience. Two weeks later, on my return to Melbourne, its air quality is the worst in the world<sup>1</sup>, though my flat is out of the path of the fire itself.

Environmentalists often wonder how to convey a crisis that you don't experience directly. Yet now in Australasia and elsewhere, we are beginning to experience the ecological crisis directly. Even with this shift from abstract to concrete, the denial from key players remains, whether conservative denial of the basic facts of anthropogenic global warming, or liberal denial about the scale of changes needed.

<sup>1</sup> "Smoke haze makes Melbourne's air quality world's worst, for a time", *The Age*: <https://tinyurl.com/ukk3b8z>

## October 28<sup>th</sup> 2019, Narrm/ Melbourne (so-called Australia)

A ragtag collection of socialists, anarchists, indigenous protectors, and liberal environmentalists blockade the International Mining and Resources Conference (IMARC) at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre.

For me, it's all very reminiscent of NZ's weapons conference blockades. In both cases the crowd is narrower than the mass marches, and more militant, yet notably intergenerational. In both cases the tactic is to directly stop industry actors even if only for a day, to take direct action, not just symbolic action. And in both cases, police repression is brutal. Although the tactics are portrayed in the press as violent, they are fundamentally the tactics of non-violent civil disobedience – putting your body on the line. The weapons conference actions recently led to the cancellation of the conference in NZ, after a number of years moving between venues and cities in a futile attempt to escape protest actions.

My first hour is spent at the front line, the main entrance. Our arms locked together, cops pressing from behind, knees into backs. The horses arrive, always a terrifying moment of intimidation, and we chant 'get those animals off those horses.' The first arrest targets Jerome Small, a prominent socialist who is on the megaphone. A number of cops descend on him, knocking him to the pavement, and we cry 'shame.'

An organiser requests bodies for another entrance. This is part of the difficulty of these blockades – the coordination to cover multiple entrances without spreading yourself too thin. About ten of us head to this smaller entrance. This site is quieter, though cops visit us a couple of times, monitoring us rather than trying to break the picket. We film them and they film us. During that time the police crackdown at the main entrance intensifies, with multiple arrests and at least one limb broken. Unfortunately, I miss the participation of my own union, the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU), despite wearing an NTEU shirt myself.

Later, a photograph of one cop shows him pulling the OK symbol, recently adopted by far-right trolls.

## September 20<sup>th</sup> 2019, Narrm/Mel- bourne (Australia)

The biggest Climate Strike yet. An estimated 100,000



attend in Melbourne.<sup>2</sup> More than 3.5% of the population attend the demonstrations in Aotearoa New Zealand.<sup>3</sup>

My union endorses the strike. A colleague's tutorial overlaps with the strike, so it's cut short. In my classes, the majority of students are engaged with the climate movement, despite being generally uninvolved in party politics.

The NTEU contingent joins the student contingent joins the main march, at state parliament. At that point I move to the pavement to watch, and film, the tens of thousands streaming past, a stream not stopping for well over half an hour. My favourite sign says 'Aliens will be so disappointed we chose capitalism over existence.'

## August 26<sup>th</sup> 2019, Narrm/Melbourne (Australia)

SBS Australia reports the following:

A tree with smoke billowing out of it was discovered just after daybreak on Monday nearby the site of a mass protest demonstration to save sacred Djab Wurrung trees located in Victoria's western districts.

Traditional Owners who have been camped out in an attempt to stop a controversial upgrade to the state's Western Highway between Ararat and Buangor said they were left feeling "gutted" by the act of vandalism...

The Western Highway development along a 12.5km stretch of land could potentially see nearly 1000 trees bulldozed.

The suspected attack comes in the wake of a mass gathering at the Djab Wurrung Embassy in the past week, as supporters of the land and trees brace for an imminent eviction so that construction of the bypass can begin.<sup>4</sup>

The Djab Wurrung Tent Embassy, set up to protect ancestor trees from a highway expansion, is around 2 hours' drive from my flat. I've visited twice, when the organisers sent out Red Alerts concerning potential police encroachment. When the arson at Djab Wurrung was perpetrated, the 2019 Australian bushfire season had not begun, but the Amazon fires were ongoing. Across the world, indigenous people are canaries in the coal mine, standing at the front lines of the fight to protect nature from capital.

Even for those of us with a low opinion of right-wing politicians, the brazenness of Australian PM Scott Morrison's non-reaction to the bushfires is shocking. Although much

has been made of his family holiday, surely more significant is the initial refusal to allocate funding to volunteer firefighters. Surely, even for a man who once held a lump of coal up in parliament saying "don't be scared", this is an obvious national emergency. Surely even if you treat this as purely a natural disaster, disconnecting it from the context of increasingly dry land and rising temperatures, it's good optics to at least pretend you take it seriously.

On December 29, months into the crisis, Morrison finally allocates some payments for New South Wales volunteer firefighters. Yet this is restricted to those who are self-employed or work for small or medium-sized businesses.<sup>5</sup> Unemployed volunteers are still threatened with losing benefits, as they are no longer available for paid work.

The New South Wales bushfire is the largest fire front in Australia's history.<sup>6</sup> The Australian bushfires are bigger than the Amazon fires or the California fires. And yet they are met with sheer complacency and negligence, bordering on mockery.

Morrison is confirming our worst fears: that much of the ruling class have decided to simply let the world burn, let the poor die, and retreat to their bunkers (a number of them located in the South Island of NZ<sup>7</sup>). Morrison is now very unpopular, but if he loses out as a result of a reshuffle, the Liberals will likely continue his policies. Australia has recently charged through 3 leaders in 4 years, a political Hydra.

Although NZ's Labour government is not quite as overtly atrocious as Australia's, their response is still grossly inadequate. The recent Zero Carbon Act was heralded for achieving bipartisan success. For all the hashing out of various details on paper, the fact that emitters will face no consequences for failing to meet targets makes the whole thing basically toothless. The reality is that reducing emissions means confronting entrenched powers such as NZ's agriculture industry. Bipartisanship and ecological justice cannot be reconciled. We're left with outright denial at worst, and symbolic commitments at best.

I still hold to the position, not new but articulated recently by Extinction Rebellion, that only a mass social movement can force the necessary institutional changes – let alone replace destructive institutions entirely. Yet as the movement grows, institutions remain as yet unchanged, and the world literally burns around us.

<sup>2</sup> 'This crisis, it affects everyone': Organisers say 100,000 at Melbourne's climate strike, The Age <https://tinyurl.com/y2zptemn>

<sup>3</sup> Tens of thousands of New Zealand children kick off new climate strikes, Reuters <https://tinyurl.com/w3ykfzl>

<sup>4</sup> "Ancestor tree on fire in suspected arson attack outside Djab Wurrung embassy", SBS Australia <https://tinyurl.com/y5zl4v8e>

<sup>5</sup> "Scott Morrison announces compensation payments for New South Wales volunteer firefighters", ABC News <https://tinyurl.com/vkbemue>

<sup>6</sup> "NSW Bushfires: Largest fire front in Australia's history", Nine News Australia <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fvUDFCwSF9M>

<sup>7</sup> "The Super Rich of Silicon Valley Have a Doomsday Escape Plan", Bloomberg <https://tinyurl.com/yaa4jzdy>

# Global warming as political murder

by DEREK JOHNSON. Originally delivered on the *Where's My Jetpack* podcast: [jetpack.zoob.net](http://jetpack.zoob.net)

A study by the United Nations has found climate change could drive 122 million more people into extreme poverty in the next 15 years, in part due to the impact it is already having on small-scale farmers. We now know that for decades, beginning in 1977, Exxon concealed its own findings that fossil fuels cause global warming, alter the climate and melt Arctic ice.

Hindsight is 20/20, but if not for Exxon's cover up NASA and others could have brought proof and the importance of climate change to our governments to do something in the late 1970's.

Talking about climate change can be nihilistically depressing because for the first time in our planet's history, we are a species aware of its impending extinction. We are living through the sixth extinction. I'm going to get to the brass tacks and the suicidally depressing roots and propose an optimistic solution.

The U.S. presidential race is off the rails again. Politicians and the media are in panic mode, because of progressive candidates who might improve lives, not because Trump is a fascist who needs to be removed immediately and cannot serve a second term. As much as I like to see them all lose control, they are turning the screws on us.

Trump must go, but beyond that, I don't care who the next president is, and I don't want anybody to be president. We need to stop having presidents. They don't know what to do anymore and the schisms are showing. The economy is about to tank again like 2008 and the government and capitalists and their political class are flipping out in panic. This election scam is a symptom of systemic problems with Really Existing Capitalist Democracy or REC'D as Chomsky calls it.

The most pressing issue of our time—our own fucking possible extinction - is only mentioned because of Bernie Sanders or Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez at least, but overall, the political class and MSM are ignoring the fire outside as California literally burns down. They all know deep down that capitalism has killed the habitability of this world.

They fucked up and killed us all. We all have to get used to struggle. We are in the struggle of our fucking lives now. It looks like things are going south quicker than we will ever have a revolution to overthrow this shit and save our species, but I hope not. The planet is going to survive, but it's going to be uninhabitable for human life. This is beyond unacceptable.

Going slow about changing our economy and using oil is just rearranging deck chairs on the Titanic, while us radicals warn about the iceberg. We have to get used to endless struggle. Even something like a Green New Deal is being violently resisted.

Demagogues right and left are going to try and convince people that it's a Malthusian overpopulation problem. Malthusianism has long been debunked and technically we already live in a post-scarcity civilization, but scarcity is enforced by markets and the state.

The problems of "overpopulation" - habitat destruction, famine, drought - are the direct result of our economic system which needs false scarcity and planned obsolescence to function.

We have enough food, shelter, and medicine for every person on the planet, but resource/"wealth" distribution is dictated by a system with no ability for long term planning.

We live under a system that allows for-profit medicine/healthcare and - based on the statistic I can't stop pointing out---America has not only enough money to feed the hungry and house every homeless person, but there are enough empty homes that every homeless person would get 6 houses each.

I agree that we need to stop focusing on neoliberalism as a new strain of capitalism, and see that it has actually given way to a return to a more raw and predatory capitalism - as it used to be and always was. I think, now, we are entering a new era of naked capitalism. We often have to ask ourselves when confronted by rulers who see the threat and choose to do nothing and hasten it.

Global warming is in progress and now irreversible. I don't want to get into conspiracy theories, but it is a reasonable hypothesis that past a certain point, the ruling elite intentionally planned to do nothing, knowing it would get locked in and all the people would die.

This is looking to be by design. Not that the rich created climate change to kill us all, but rather they are adapting to it and exploiting it rather than doing something about it. Perhaps what we're witnessing in global warming is an improvised planned genocide of many global south nations that will make prior genocides seem quite small in comparison.

Global warming denialists are Holocaust deniers in their own right and should be treated as such. I'm afraid that, rather than combat climate change the powers that be can enforce walling in countries, closing immigration/migration and starve out and kill people with the elements



and act like they didn't do it on purpose. It really looks like rather than doing anything, they are planning to just build walled- in cities and let the poor die.

They can cull the populations like never before. Under this unleashed raw capitalism, they get to wipe out the so-called "developing world" and surplus labour here and there. The weakest and poorest are intentionally being left to bear the worst brunt.

This may technically be genocide by proxy through economic policy if you will, but intentional inaction is ethically no different than intentional planning/action. It really looks like rather than doing anything, they are planning to just build walled in cities and let the poor die. This is essentially genocide. This is no different than what Stalin did to Ukraine except on scale.

The proper term is democide.

This term was revived and redefined by the political scientist R. J. Rummel as "the murder of any person or people by their government, including genocide, politicide and mass murder". For example, government-sponsored killings for political reasons would be considered democide under Rummel's hypothesis

Democide can also include deaths arising from "intentionally or knowingly reckless and depraved disregard for life"; this brings into account many deaths arising through various neglects and abuses, such as forced mass starvation.

Rummel explicitly excludes battle deaths in his definition. Capital punishment, actions taken against armed civilians during mob action or riot, and the deaths of non-combatants killed during attacks on military targets so long as the primary target is military, are not considered democide.

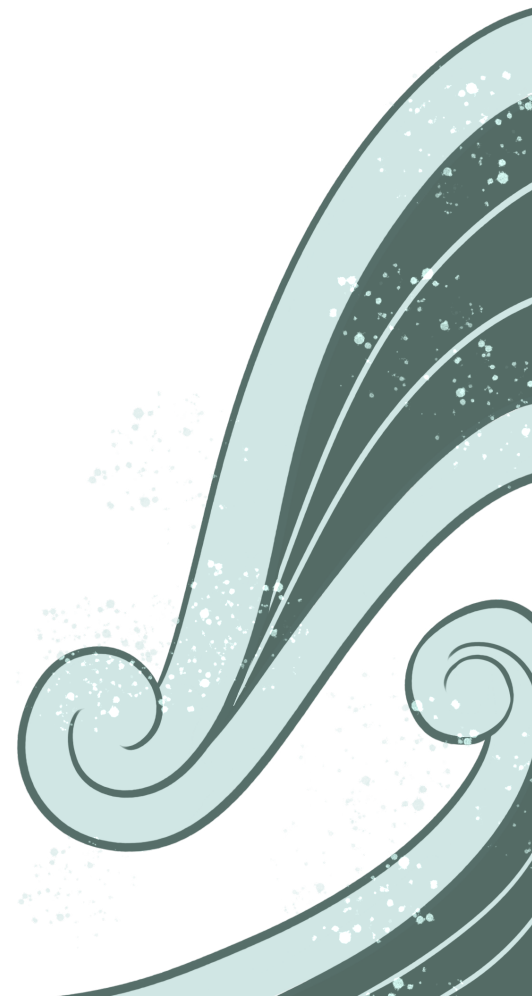
According to Rummel, democide surpassed war as the leading cause of non-natural death in the 20th century. Rummel estimated that there have been 262 million victims of democide in the last century. According to his figures, six times as many people have died from the actions of people working for governments than have died in battle.

This destroys Stephen Pinker's thesis that less people are dying from war, conflict and violence because of strong states, thus justifying states and ultimately capitalism. His calculation only works if you ignore democide and structural violence.

In my opinion, I feel as if, in scorched Earth fashion, capitalists are literally making sure there is no alternative if they collapse the economic order or are overthrown. We may get eco-socialism or full communism---but in a Mad Max wasteland.

We need a fundamentally new society because the status quo can no longer hold. Martin Luther King said it best: we need a revolution in values.

We need a social revolution. Our task now is to hasten such a global socialist revolution, to forge an eco-socialism for an actually free and sustainable future. We may have to go down trying to build that better society or we are going to live in Mad Max. It's "Communism or barbarism" as Rosa Luxemburg said, indeed.



# System Change not Climate Change! But how?

By JOJO KLICK

A sentiment that is shared by many within the growing climate movement is that there is a connection between the capitalist mode of production and the climate crisis. In this piece, I will analyse this connection and explore what that means for transformational strategies towards eco-communism as well as immediate demands for fewer greenhouse gas emissions.

For more than a year now, students have been striking for the climate each Friday all over the world, following in the footsteps of other movements for climate justice, often carried out by communities on the frontlines who are affected by carbon mining, oil drilling and other fossil projects. Yet, so far it does not look like the measures taken by politicians after this pressure from the streets will be likely to prevent crucial tipping points that will lead to an irreversible climate catastrophe that will make huge parts of this planet uninhabitable. Many within the climate movement are beginning to understand that this might have something to do with capitalism and that “if solutions within this system are so impossible to find, then maybe we should change the system itself”, as Greta Thunberg says.

But why does capitalism ruin the climate? Within capitalism, the means of production are owned privately and most goods and services we need (or sometimes don't really need such as SUVs) are produced as commodities by private companies, which means they are not produced directly to fulfil a certain need, but to be sold on the market. On the market, companies compete against each other: Each of them wants us to buy THEIR product. They need to make a profit from selling their commodities, not only so the company owners (aka capitalists) can have a fancy life (which they most often do), but also to re-invest the profit as capital, e.g. to buy more effective machines or hire more workers or pay for more advertising so that they can produce better or cheaper and thus have an advantage within the competition against other companies. If one company would not do this, it had to fear that others are faster and that it would vanish from the market.

Competition also means that companies need to externalize costs wherever possible. If they can pollute the air without paying for it, they are likely to do it. On top of that, the need to reinvest money as capital in order to get more money (which Marx expressed with the famous formula  $M-C-M'$ , meaning money-commodity-more money) leads to what economists as well as environmentalist

critics call “economic growth”. This abstract growth also leads to a growth of material production which means the use of more resources. Additionally, as digitalization and automation makes it continuously cheaper to produce goods, the use of resources might even grow more than the economic value produced. Unlimited economic growth is not possible on a planet with limited resources but within capitalism, this growth-imperative cannot be escaped.

States have some capacities to limit these destructive tendencies of capitalism and have indeed done so for more than a hundred years (capitalists are also dependent on this to some extent, since otherwise capitalism would destroy its foundations even faster). One recent example for this is the carbon price, e.g. in the form of a tax that companies have to pay for their emissions. However, these capacities are limited, since states also compete against each other. If one state would set accurately high environmental and social standards, companies would be likely to move to other countries where they can produce cheaper. Of course, states could also invest in “green” sectors such as renewable energies (which is discussed as a “Green New Deal”) and make economic growth less carbon-intensive. Even if such a “Green New Deal” might help fight climate change, it would not question economic growth and thus only lead to the extraction of other resources (such as lithium for batteries), which often happens under brutal conditions in countries of the Global South and would set the basis for the next environmental crisis in a couple of years or decades.

A truly eco-friendly alternative would mean the abolition of capitalism and thus of private property and the commodity-form. Initial stages of such a form of re/production<sup>1</sup> can be seen in the commons, resources that people use collectively in a self-organized way and need-oriented.<sup>2</sup> Commons are things like commonly owned land (historically in medieval Europe, today still in many indigenous communities), community gardens or social centres, but also Wikipedia or open source software. The way these things are used, managed and maintained, through commoning, gives examples of how society as a whole could be organized: Production and consumption would not be as separated as today, people would do freely what they find important and produce for their

<sup>1</sup> “Re/production” implies that production and reproduction are no longer separated.

<sup>2</sup> See my article on counter-strategies against the far right and conservative leftism from last year “International Perspectives” issue: <https://fightback.org.nz/2019/02/11/germany-far-right-conservative-leftism/>



and other people's needs and not to make money. Things would be re/produced as commons, not as commodities. Karl Marx describes the commodity as the elementary form of capitalism. In the same way, the elementary form of communism might be the commons.<sup>3</sup>(3) In such a commons-based libertarian communist society, there would be no need to produce more and more stuff and people could manage the eco-systems in a sustainable manner.

When it comes to strategies of communist transformation, this perspective means that anti-capitalist movements need to build and reclaim the commons from below. This also involves expropriating the means of production and other resources such as land or houses that need to be freed from private property and made into commons which is unlikely to happen on a big enough scale without some kind of revolutionary rupture. So far, the majority of the climate movement seems far away from such an approach. At this stage, it might thus be important to tackle the ideologies that present capitalism and market society as the only options (known as TINA, "There is no alternative") and to discuss alternatives to capitalism and how to get there within social movements and beyond.

Yet, since climate crisis is an urgent issue, every fight for immediate reductions of carbon emissions is also worth fighting, even if they do not get rid of the root causes of environmental destruction. Besides fighting for immediate reforms, these struggles are also an opportunity for people to come together, to develop solidarity and to discuss about further horizons. In fact, within these kinds of struggles people often already practice commoning and reclaim or defend the commons.

This can be seen in a lot of indigenous struggles (e.g. at Standing Rock or currently in the struggle of the Wet'su-wet'en people against the Coastal GasLink Pipeline in Canada), but also elsewhere, e.g. in the struggle to defend Hambach forest in the Rhineland coal mining area in Germany.<sup>4</sup> This forest that had been managed as a commons for hundreds of years by the local communities has been cut down further and further every year for coal mining since the 1970s – a process that has now been stopped after years of protests, direct actions and legal actions against the coal mining project (while the forest will not be cut down now, it is still under threat by water shortages due to the mining project). Most prominent in this struggle is the occupation of the forest (with tree houses and huts) by radical climate activists that was started in 2012 and is still going on today. While the activists fought immediately against the deforestation and coal mining through their occupation but also through

other means of direct action such as blockades or sabotages, they also reclaimed the forest as a commons and organized their lives in a way that can be described as commoning: You don't have to pay to live there or eat the communally cooked food (often made from leftover vegetables from local farmers or saved from the supermarkets' dumpster), everyone does voluntarily what they are motivated to do, there are no formal hierarchies and informal hierarchies are tried to be kept as flat as possible. Even though such a life is not without conflicts and contradictions, many people describe their experiences there as life-changing, seeing that a world without capitalism, competition and domination might be possible.

Another lesson that can be learned from the struggle about Hambach forest is the importance of direct action: By breaking the rules, occupying the forest and blocking coal infrastructure, activists did not only draw attention to the issue, but also damaged the electricity company RWE economically. Without these tactics, the struggle would probably not have been so successful.

These two lessons from Hambach forest, that if we build social formations of commoning within our movements, we can make libertarian communism an imaginable possibility and lived experience and that if we use direct action we can put a lot more pressure on politicians and companies might be helpful for the climate strike movement that until this point is rather tame. In addition, the rhetoric of the strike which is quite central in the movement could be a starting point for a more radical approach. If not only students would go on strike, but also the huge majority of workers, a climate strike could implement a lot of economic pressure. This pressure could force politicians to implement further reforms to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, even if these are bad for the economy. A strike that includes industrial workers would also be a direct action in the narrower sense of the word, since striking would mean less production (for at least a short time) and thus less CO<sub>2</sub>-emissions. The demand for a radically shorter working week could be one focus of such a strike movement that would link the immediate wellbeing of the workers with climate protection.<sup>5</sup> A shorter working week would also allow people to spend more time building and experimenting with non-capitalist ways of re/production in commons projects.

These are just examples of (possible) reform-oriented struggles that can be linked to the broader goal of libertarian communism. Green capitalism is an oxymoron and the fight for climate justice has to be anti-capitalist which means that in the end we need to seize the means of production (probably also destroy a lot of them if they are inherently non-ecologic), do away with private property and the commodity form and organize the re/production in the principles of commoning. If we have this goal clear, we can think about how the current struggles for reforms and immediate reductions of greenhouse gas

<sup>3</sup> See Stefan Meretz on peer-commonist produced livelihoods: <https://keimform.de/2017/peer-commonist-produced-livelihoods/>

<sup>4</sup> See my article "Fighting Europe's biggest hole" in *Fightback's* 2015 issue on climate crisis: <https://fightback.org.nz/2015/10/17/germany-fighting-europes-biggest-hole/>

<sup>5</sup> See Phillip Frey, "The ecological limits of work": <http://autonomy.work/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/The-Ecological-Limits-of-Work-final.pdf>

emissions need to be fought in order to get closer to this goal. We can explore where we already do commoning within our movements today and evaluate how we can expand that. We could link struggles of students who fear for their future with the struggles of workers for a shorter working week and the struggles of indigenous communities who have long been on the frontlines in the fight against fossil capitalism to a common struggle for climate justice and a sustainable libertarian communist world.



# How to centre indigenous people in climate conversations

By NADINE ANNE HURA. Originally published at *The Spinoff*:

<https://thespinoff.co.nz/atea/01-11-2019/how-to-centre-indigenous-people-in-climate-conversations/>



Haylee Korioi (centre) with members of Te Ara Whatu and Pania Newton (left) at Ihumatao.  
Photo: Holly Burgess

‘Amplify indigenous voices’ is a sentiment I’ve been hearing more and more, but I’m left wondering what it means in a practical sense to those saying it. I caught up with Haylee Korioi who is a member of Te Ara Whatu, a group of Māori and Pasifika youth from Aotearoa taking action on Climate Change. As in previous years, Te Ara Whatu are planning to send a group of eight rangatahi to the COP25 UN climate conference next month (with help from Pledge Me). If mainstream media is your main source of news you may not have heard of this group, but they’ve been doing the mahi of protecting and advocating for Papatūānuku since they formed in 2017, with a number of prominent rangatahi among their tuākana including Pania Newton, Anevili Tupuola and India Logan Riley.

I wanted to talk to Haylee about indigenous sovereignty and why, with groups like Extinction Rebellion and the Global Climate Strike getting massive public buy-in, indigenous-led groups are still rallying from the margins. This feels especially ironic when many mainstream movements will be the first to acknowledge that they need to prioritise indigenous voices as those most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. I found myself wondering whether the call to amplify indigenous voices was genuine or tokenism tacked on for show. And if not, what does that mean in practice? Will mainstream movements still be prepared to amplify narratives they find uncomfortable or challenging to listen to?



One of the things I've always loved about Haylee is her ability to see complex issues deeply and to articulate them clearly. He manu hōmiromiro. We first met in 2015 at Te Wānanga Takiura where we were both rumaki reo students. Haylee advanced through the programme much faster than me, attending kura reo in the weekends while I flailed around in the shallows with basic grammar and flashcards. She studied Māori and maths at university and the year when we were classmates, she was always either writing furiously on her laptop or reading a textbook. Our decolonisation journeys have traversed similar pathways and I will often look to Haylee, who is 26 to my 42, to check my thinking. We're both Ngāpuhi. Haylee is Te Rarawa from Pukepoto while I'm Ngāti Hine from Waiōmio. It's been a few years since we last caught up but we didn't waste any time talking about the weather (unless you count the climate).

**Nadine Hura: What do you think about all these global movements against climate change, especially the call to 'amplify indigenous voices?'**

Haylee Koroi: From what I have seen of mainstream or global climate movements, they often centre colonial ideas and are not necessarily prepared to give those ideas – or their associated power – away. These movements call for inclusivity of indigenous people but that feels peripheral to me. Metaphorically, it's like being asked to gather around the fire that someone else has lit (after they've systematically gone about putting my fire out for generations) and then asking me to help them stoke it.

Why can't these movements support and resource pre-existing indigenous movements – including the continued push for Māori water rights, the protection of Ihumātao, the Hands Off Our Tamariki campaign, and calls against Tuia 250? These are all opportunities for climate action but often Māori voices are shouting alone. It often feels that white movements co-opt indigenous ideas, give them new names and then claim them as their own.

**The metaphor of building a fire and asking indigenous people to bring the fuel is really powerful. But I know that some people will find that pretty uncomfortable to hear. I'm not sure a lot of people will see the connection, for example, between Ihumātao and climate change.**

Yeah, because indigenous people are always expected to do the work of decolonising. The truth is that indigenous people have always stood for the protection of the land. Why are we creating whole new entities when we should be supporting whānau, hapū, and iwi?

For 250 years, colonial systems have sought to undermine our relationship to the whenua by removing us from it – our very resource base – in order to fund colonisation. People think of climate change as an environmental issue, but it's a human one that has become manifest in the external world. Human-induced climate

injustice has been enacted on my tīpuna for centuries.

Climate change to me represents the progressive erosion of our whakapapa, from the very first glimpses of colonisation, which wiped out tens of thousands of ancestors. Then came urbanisation when we were moved into the city and became disconnected from our traditional knowledge systems. Even within the context of our homes we have dysfunctional family relationships and poor relationships with our own individual tinana and wairua. All these areas things have facilitated the gradual disconnection of individuals from their whakapapa. The climate, or Ranginui as he is known within our creation stories, is almost the last frontier – the last potential point of disconnect.

**I notice that some of these movements will try to say that the protection of the environment should be above or beyond politics. Do you think that's possible or even desirable?**

It's ridiculous to say that climate change isn't political. For hundreds of years, indigenous people have been, and continue to be, imprisoned for trying to protect their land from exploitation. How is that not political?

It actually reminds me of the old adage of "I don't see colour". It's a nice sentiment when your every waking moment isn't influenced by the colour of your skin. But for most people of colour, their skin will subject them to all kinds of judgements and mistreatment.

It's the same with statements like 'climate change doesn't discriminate.' Well, that's nice in theory, but I think of my own awa, Tāngonge on the outskirts of Kaitia, which was drained for farmland leaving our hapū without our traditional food sources. The policies that allowed this to happen were racist, and it changed our local microclimate forever.

**What about the people who say the best climate action you can take is *not* to have children? That by having kids you're contributing to the drain on the world's natural resources?**

No, it's colonisation and people who uphold colonisation who are draining the world of its resources. Māori don't have to bear that burden. It's definitely not us. We already know that those contributing the least to climate change are the worst affected and most vulnerable. This shows how inherently political this issue is. The restoration and continuation of whakapapa is climate action. Having Māori children and raising them to be kaitiaki, as their ancestors were, is perhaps the most powerful form of climate action. Tamariki are healing for us as whānau and for the earth as our ancestor. Without our tamariki there is no future and nothing to hope for.

**How do you feel about the language around climate change – words like climate fatigue and crisis and depression?**

Without invalidating those that feel that way, the reality is that through colonisation, we've been experiencing the symptoms of climate crisis for generations. At the same time, I don't get too bothered by it because as long as Māori are controlling Māori narratives in regards to climate change and we don't buy into it, I think we'll be alright.

The one good thing that has come out of the climate crisis as a whole is the need to have more progressive conversations. Even though some of these mainstream movements are problematic, the fact that people are willing to have these conversations at all is a good thing. Especially if they wouldn't have had these conversations otherwise.

**But is having the conversation enough? What are the solutions in practice?**

Ultimately there is going to have to be a lot of letting go of power, even within climate movements, in order for us to come to a real solution. The solution needs to firstly (not secondly) focus on decolonisation. That looks like decolonising farming processes and restoring animal ecosystems. That looks like returning land to indigenous peoples. That looks like food sovereignty. That looks like honouring Te Tiriti. Anything less will not suffice.

**Why is it important for Te Ara Whatu to attend the UN Climate Change conference? Especially now that Chile has announced their withdrawal. Do you know where the conference will be and does this development impact on your message?**

Totally. We're really supportive of the decision to find an alternative venue for the conference so that the Chilean administration can focus their energies on their own people and finding a just and peaceful way forward. We've been keeping an eye on unfolding events for a while, so the announcement is not so much a surprise as a complication. We're waiting for further updates from the UN but until we receive different advice, we're working on the assumption that we'll attend the conference wherever it is.

In the context of human rights violations in Chile, it more important now than ever to ensure that indigenous voices are at the table and in the room at COP 25. Corporations and governments need to be held accountable for the generations of neglect and violence that they've inflicted on indigenous people and by extension, the environment. 'Amplify indigenous voices' is a nice sentiment but it's meaningless if no-one is listening. It's not enough to say that indigenous views matter, we actually need it backed up with action. We need to be able to challenge the existing power structures and shift the autonomy from those in high places, back to the whānau and community where it has always belonged.



# Indonesia faces catastrophic floods, disappearing islands

By PETER BOYLE and YUYUN HARMONO. Originally published in *Green Left Weekly*: <https://www.greenleft.org.au/content/climate-emergency-indonesia-faces-catastrophic-floods-disappearing-islands>



Flooding in Jakarta earlier this year. Photo: Alfian.

While the stark reality of the global climate emergency struck home in Australia with its worst bushfire season, its neighbour Indonesia faced catastrophic floods and islands disappearing below the rising sea. *Green Left's* Peter Boyle interviewed Yuyun Harmono, the climate change campaigner of Friends of the Earth Indonesia (Wahana Lingkungan Hidup Indonesia – WAHLI).

**In recent weeks there have been devastating floods in Indonesia. What are the latest statistics about these and is there a link with global warming?**

The floods in Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, Bekasi (Greater Jakarta) and Banten province caused 67 deaths and displaced 36,419 people. Economic losses have reached RP10 trillion.

According to the Meteorology, Climatology and Geo-physics Agency, rainfall in Jakarta in early 2020 was the

highest in history, more than 300 millimetres per day. It correlates directly with climate change.

There were also sea-level rises of 4–8 centimetres per year on Jakarta's North Coast. Sea-level rise is a direct result of the climate crisis.

However, other factors contributed to the flooding in Jakarta, namely the unpreparedness of the government and subsidence, which is occurring faster than the rise in sea level.

In the north of Jakarta, land subsidence has reached 12 cm per year, the highest in Jakarta. The average land subsidence in Jakarta is 7.5 cm per year. Land subsidence in Jakarta was caused by rapid and expansive overdevelopment, which has covered almost 80% of Jakarta in concrete.



In addition, heavy extraction of groundwater contributes to land subsidence. Residents take groundwater because they cannot get clean water from the water pipes, especially since Jakarta's water supply was privatised in 1997.

Clean water reaches only 60% of Jakarta's total population, so water privatisation has proved to be a failure. The public needs to take back management of Jakarta's water.

**What about reports of some islands in Indonesia that have already submerged because of sea-level rises?**

Based on the environmental research by the WALHI regional office in South Sumatra, there are two islands in the province, Betet and Gundul, that have been submerged due to sea-level rise.

These two islands are in the administration of Banyuasin Regency, South Sumatra province. Betet Island is now one metre below sea level, while Gundul Island is three metres below sea level.

It is predicted that in 2020 four more islands will sink. Climate projections state that by 2050 there will be 23 million people throughout Indonesia who will be forced to leave their homes because of rising sea levels due to the climate crisis.

**What are the other impacts of the global climate crisis on Indonesia?**

The climate crisis causes the dry season to get longer, as happened in 2015 and 2019. The El Nino effect will occur more frequently, thus changing the growing season for farmers. This will affect food security and reduce the production of staple foods, especially rice.

In addition, forest and land fires will also occur more frequently, as occurred in 2015 and 2019. Although almost 80% of forest and land fires are caused by land clearing for large-scale plantations, the drought is getting longer and elevated temperatures exacerbate forest and land fires.

**What demands are environmental organisations making on the Indonesian government, on international institutions and the richer countries to deal with the climate emergency?**

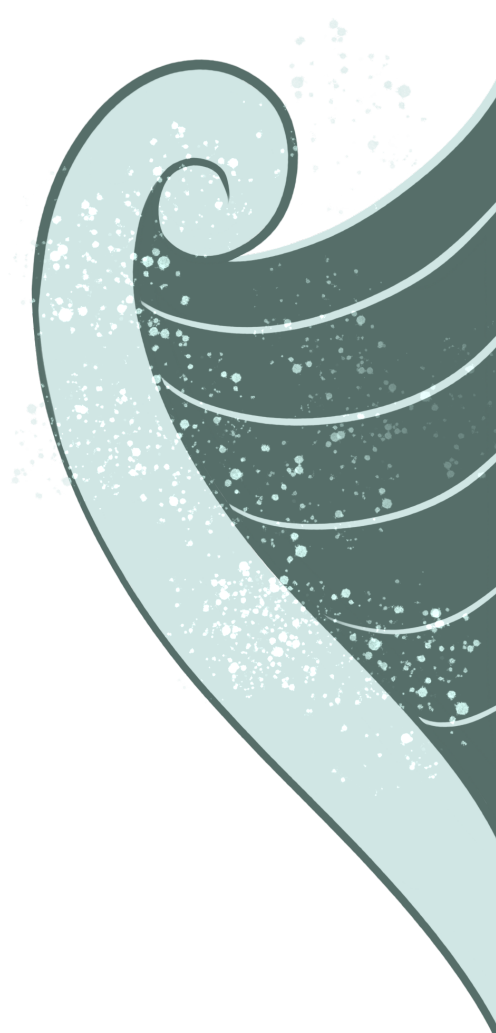
Indonesia must abandon fossil fuels, especially coal, as soon as possible: according to the International Panel on Climate Change's *Special Report: Global Warming of 1.5°*, coal must be abandoned as the primary energy source in the world by 2050.

In addition, the Indonesian government must stop deforestation, and forest and land fires, because the land-based sector is the biggest cause of carbon emissions in Indonesia.

The Indonesian government must also strengthen community adaptation, especially to the dangers of the

climate crisis that will occur later, as well as prepare efforts to push the developed countries and corporations responsible for the loss and damage that has occurred.

Developed countries, like Australia, must drastically reduce their emissions without carbon offsets and trading schemes. Developed countries must also provide funding for low-carbon development transitions in the developing countries. Developed countries also have to pay for the loss and damage that has been experienced by Indonesia.



# Protecting the environment and jobs go together

by STEVE O'BRIEN. Originally published in *Green Left Weekly*: <https://www.greenleft.org.au/content/protecting-environment-and-jobs-go-together>



**CFMEU organiser Mark Cross speaks at a climate change protest in Newcastle on January 10.**  
**Photo: Extinction Rebellion**

One of the best received speakers at the recent climate rally in Newcastle, Australia, was Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU) organiser Mark Cross.

This is not to dismiss the powerful words spoken by the bushfire survivors, Aboriginal activists, youth leaders and environmental experts who also addressed the 2500 people in Newcastle's Civic Park on January 10.

All the speeches, chants and songs were moving, justly angry and poignant.

Cross, however, was an unexpected voice. He was representing a union often portrayed as a climate change denying one or, as Prime Minister Scott Morrison likes to assert, criminals who all need to be jailed.

Cross kicked off by acknowledging the extraordinary fire-fighters, volunteers and activists that had stood in front of "these almighty flames that could have possibly killed hundreds of us".

He called on the construction industry "to follow the likes of Synergy Scaffold, Salex Linings and Crane Contractors who are continuing to run trucks and supplies to the South Coast ... and to stand right beside our union and its members as we go about rebuilding this country".

This was good, but what he said next was probably unexpected: "Climate change is a real issue in this country. We can no longer ignore it. What we need to do is to ensure a just transition of jobs for workers out of that fossil fuel industry."

Cross went on to highlight the need for Australia to manufacture the components for wind farms to make a just transition a reality.

This is a union branch that understands that protecting workers' jobs and protecting the environment go together.

Cross's speech and the small, but visible, contingent of workers who had arrived from work and who were proudly holding CFMEU flags, was in sharp contrast to the union movement's relative absence from the recent climate rallies, which have largely been led by young people.

One reason might be because union leaderships are still falling in behind the Australian Council of Trade Unions' "re-elect Labour at all costs" strategy, which effectively ignores the seismic shift in public opinion around needing to take action on climate change.

The planet, and communities being affected by climate change now, cannot wait while Anthony Albanese and the Australian Labor Party get their act together.

Instead of talking up coal exports, Labor should be advocating a cut to coal production as part of a transition away from fossil fuel exports.

Lowering production and raising coal prices, the short-term result, could help generate revenue to fund a just transition for affected workers as we make the shift away from coal to renewables.

Labor, like most unions, is failing to respond to the new community outlook generated by the drought and bushfires.

Even if the drought worsens, the New South Wales government has flagged that it will favour the continuing operation of mining and coal-burning power generators in the Hunter region.

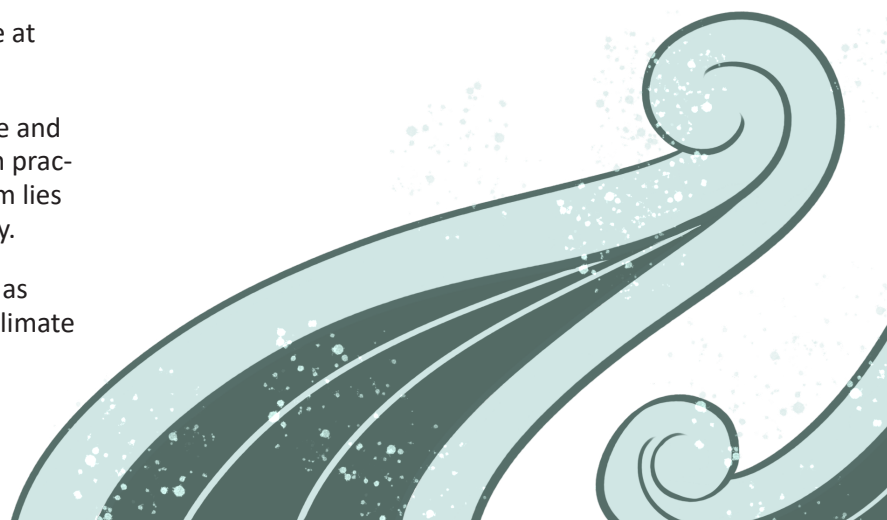
As people realise that we are seemingly expected to eat coal, the idea that the coal industry and coal-powered electricity generation be placed under public control as part of a just transition becomes very reasonable.

Therefore it was positive to see a union making links with, and earning respect among climate activists — some of whom initially asked the hi-vis clad, union flag-carrying CFMEU contingent whether they were at the right rally!

Newcastle CFMEU members knew where they were and why they were there: supporting communities with practical solidarity and recognising that the real problem lies with government support for the fossil fuel industry.

Let's hope we see lots of CFMEU members, as well as workers from a range of other unions, at the next climate rally and student-led climate strike.

A strategy to promote union participation in the climate movement will draw us one step closer to finishing off PM Scott Morrison and moving to a sustainable future.





# About Fightback (Aotearoa/ Australasia)

Fightback is a trans-Tasman socialist media project with a magazine, a website, and other platforms. We believe that a structural analysis is vital in the task of winning a world of equality and plenty for all. Capitalism, our current socio-economic system, is not only exploiting people and planet – but is designed to operate this way. Therefore, we advocate a total break with the current system to be replaced by one designed and run collectively based on principles of freedom, mutual aid, and social need.

Fightback is a trans-Tasman organization, operating in Aotearoa and Australia. In the modern era of free movement across the Tasman, ‘Australasia’ is becoming a reality in a way it has not been since the 19th century. So many New Zealanders (tauiwi as well as tangata whenua) now live and work in Australia – and decisions made in one country increasingly impact the other, as the inter-governmental controversy surrounding the Manus Island detention camp shows.

We wish to engage socialists from both sides of the Tasman – in particular, socialists from Aotearoa living and working in Australia – to continue the lines of analysis and directions of organization which we have been pursuing. Beyond the dogmas of ‘sect Marxism’; beyond national boundaries; towards a genuinely decolonised, democratic, feminist and queer-friendly anti-capitalism.

We recognise that capitalism was imposed in Aotearoa and Australia through colonisation. While we draw substantially on European whakapapa and intellectual traditions, we seek to break the unity of the European colonial project, in favour of collective self-determination and partnership between tangata whenua and tauiwi. We recognise that this must be a learning process.

While we draw inspiration and lessons from history, theoretical agreement on past revolutions is not the basis for our unity. Rather, we unify around a common programme for transformation here and now.

## Fightback’s Ten-Point Programme

Fightback stands for the following core programme, and for building institutions of grassroots power in the working class and oppressed groups to bring them about:

- Constitutional transformation based on indigenous self-determination and workers power. Indigenous and worker co-ops to operate as guardians over public resources.
- Secure, appropriate and meaningful work for those who want it, with a shorter working week. The benefit system to be supplemented with a Universal Basic Income, removal of punitive sanctions.
- International working-class solidarity. Close the Detention Centres. Open borders to Australia and Aotearoa, full rights for migrant workers. Recognise Pasefika rights to self-determination, Australia and Aotearoa to contribute to a ‘no-strings’ development fund for Pacific nations. Opposition to all imperialist ventures and alliances; neither Washington nor Moscow.
- No revolution without women’s liberation. Full funding for appropriate, community-driven abuse prevention and survivor support, free access to all reproductive technologies, public responsibility for childcare and other reproductive work. The right to full, safe expression of sexuality and gender identity.
- An ecosocialist solution to climate change. End fossil fuel extraction, expand green technology and public transport, and radically restructure industrial food production.
- Freedom of information. End corporate copyright policies in favour of creative commons. Public support for all media technologies, expansion of affordable broadband internet to the whole country. An end to government spying.
- Abolish prisons, replace with restorative justice and rehabilitation.
- Universal right to housing. Expansion of high-density, high-quality public housing, strict price controls on privately owned houses. Targeted support to end involuntary homelessness.
- Fully-funded healthcare at every level. Move towards health system based on informed consent, remove inequities in accident compensation, opposition to “top-down” efforts to change working people’s behaviour.
- Fully-funded education at every level, run by staff and students. Funding for all forms of education and research, enshrining indigenous knowledge as a core part of the curriculum.

For an expanded discussion of this programme, please see the pamphlet *What Is Fightback?*

# Also available from

# **Fightback**

*Struggle, Solidarity, Socialism*

## Pamphlets

					
Women, Class and Revolution	Socialism and Māori Sovereignty	Queers and the Capitalist Media	Psychology and Capitalism	What is Conservative Leftism?	What is Fightback?

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